

Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Clinical Psychology Externship

Externship Information 2023-2024



Photo of Jesse Brown VA Medical Center building exterior

The **Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center (JBVAMC)** is located two miles west of the Loop, Chicago's central downtown district. It is part of Chicago's Illinois Medical District, the nation's largest urban medical district, which also includes Rush University Medical Center, the John H. Stroger Hospital of Cook County, and the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. JBVAMC includes a 200-bed acute care facility and has four satellite outpatient clinics. JBVAMC serves approximately 62,000 Veterans and has approximately 2800 employees. More information about the medical center can be found at its website, <http://www.chicago.va.gov/>.

Academic Affiliations

JBVAMC is affiliated with the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine and Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Over 1800 medical and associated health trainees rotate through the medical center each year, receiving training in medicine, surgery, psychiatry, neurology, dentistry, radiology, orthopedics, psychology, nursing, pharmacy, social work, and audiology, among other disciplines. Moreover, JBVAMC is a competitive psychology practicum site in the Chicago area, drawing extern applicants from up to 15 local American Psychological Association (APA)-accredited clinical and counseling psychology programs.

Accreditation Status/Regulation

The JBVAMC Clinical Psychology Externship Program is a self-regulated program that provides a variable number of practica each year, pending staffing and clinical rotation availability. The program is not a member of ACEPT but attempts to minimize interference with ACEPT's selection and notification policies as much as is practical given the constraints of the program. The externship program works with individual academic programs on issues of competency evaluation and establishing training agreements. Placement in an externship practicum requires coordination between the externship program and the academic program to ensure coverage under the Federal Tort Claims Act.

The JBVAMC Clinical Psychology Internship Program is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation (CoA) of the American Psychological Association and adheres to the guidelines of the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC). Our last completed accreditation review commenced in 2012, and we obtained full accreditation through 2020, the maximum period that could be granted to an internship setting. We are currently in the process of seeking re-accreditation, the timeline of which has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our site visit occurred in May 2022, and we are awaiting determination of re-accreditation from APA. Accreditation documentation may be viewed upon request. APA accreditation has been maintained continuously since our first accreditation in 1979.

The JBVAMC Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in Clinical Psychology is a relatively new program having started during the 2014-2015 year. This program has two tracks: one focusing on clinical training related to co-occurring post-traumatic stress disorder, substance use disorders, and pain-related disorders and the other focusing on serious mental illness. The program adheres to the guidelines of APPIC and will likely be pursuing initial accreditation in the coming year. More information on accreditation is available from the CoA of the American Psychological Association.

The address is:

Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation
Education Directorate,
American Psychological Association
750 First Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20002-4242
202-336-5979
www.apa.org/ed/accreditation

Nondiscrimination Policy and Diversity Statement

The JBVAMC Psychology Training Programs abide by APPIC's policy on nondiscrimination: "Training agencies have practices which are nondiscriminatory in regard to race/ethnic background, gender, age, sexual orientation, lifestyle, and disabilities." The JBVAMC Psychology Training Programs adhere to Federal Executive

Order 13160, “Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs.” In addition to abiding by these non-discrimination policies, the Psychology Training Programs strongly seek and value individuals with diverse experiences and backgrounds as the foundation of a rich training environment. Our program emphasizes respect for trainees, staff members, and patients representing all forms of diversity, and prohibit discrimination based on the aforementioned identities as well as gender identity, marital status, socioeconomic status, Veteran status, indigenous heritage, and political affiliation. All applicants are entitled to equal treatment in the selection process and freedom from discrimination and harassment. The Psychology Training Programs seek to obtain trainees that represent diverse identities. Individuals with minoritized identities are strongly encouraged to apply. Jesse Brown VA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and our Psychology Training Programs follow all institutional guidelines in this regard.

COVID-19 Related Changes

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to numerous changes since March 2020. While we cannot predict how COVID will continue to shape our work, our environment of care, and our lives, we can say with confidence that the safety of our trainees, staff, and the Veterans we serve is our top priority. We are consistently working with hospital and national level leadership to follow public health, vaccination, facility safety, and social distancing guidelines, and we are proactively communicating with trainees in real-time as new information and developments become available. With regard to the 2023-2024 training year, we do not anticipate any significant changes to the foundational clinical rotations and training opportunities outlined in this brochure. We do anticipate that at least some of our clinical services will remain delivered via telehealth, and some of our meetings will likely maintain a virtual attendance option when in-person attendance is not feasible. Additionally, interviews for the 2023-2024 training year will be virtual. We will continue to modify our public materials as new changes become available, and we appreciate your patience and flexibility throughout this time.

Chicago Location

Chicago is the third largest metropolitan area in the United States. Chicago is a hub of arts, offers year-round cultural activities, is the home of world-famous architecture, and has dozens of annual festivals. The music and food scene are especially robust. Jesse Brown VAMC is convenient to expressways and public transportation, including buses and trains that offer transportation to and from our building within blocks of its entrance. Chicago is home to a large and diverse population that identifies primarily as African American (33%), white non-Hispanic/Latinx (31%), and Hispanic/Latinx (29%). However, this racial breakdown does not adequately capture the strong cultural pride that exists within the city’s ethnic neighborhoods and LGBTQ+ communities. Further information about Chicago is available at www.CityofChicago.org.

JBVAMC's Patient Population

A Veteran is defined as anyone who has served in the Armed Forces, whether during wartime or peacetime. Veterans commonly eligible for VA services include older Veterans, combat Veterans, disabled Veterans, any Veteran who has experienced a military sexual trauma, OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, and indigent Veterans with honorable, general, or medical discharges

JBVAMC serves a combination of urban, suburban, and rural Veterans. JBVAMC serves the fourth highest percentage of Black/African American Veterans among VA hospitals nationally, with 47% of our Veterans identifying as Black/African American. While the majority of the Veterans served by JBVAMC identify as men who are 55 years of age or older, we also serve a growing number of women-identified and younger Veterans and a growing number of self-identified sexual and gender minority Veterans. The Veterans we serve often have co-occurring medical and psychiatric concerns and experience psychosocial stressors and adverse impacts from health disparities. Common diagnoses include depression, anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, combat trauma, sexual trauma, race-based stress and trauma, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and substance use disorders.

Training Philosophy

The Department of Veterans Affairs employs more psychologists and trains more psychology trainees than any other American institution. We are proud to be part of the training mission of the VA. The training philosophy of the JBVAMC psychology externship program is as follows:

- **Scientist-Practitioner Model:** We adhere to a scientist-practitioner model of clinical training. In supervision, externs share their decision-making processes, formulate a course of action using their scientific knowledge of psychology, follow through with decisions, and critique the results of interventions. Staff members refer externs to appropriate professional research and writings so that externs become aware of the empirical validity for the treatments that are provided. Some staff members are involved in research or scholarly writing, and a number of our externs have presented at conferences or have published articles during their time with us.

- **Cultural and Systems Competence:** Externs assess the patient's social system, which includes the patient, the family, racial, ethnic and cultural issues, the community, and the home environment. Also, externs negotiate the patient's treatment system, including the treatment team and other programs at the medical center. Externs are trained to meet the special demands of mental health service delivery to urban, racial, and ethnic minority populations.

- **Placing Training Above Service Delivery and Revenue Generation:** The fulfillment of the externs' training needs remains the paramount consideration of the program. At no time will externs' needs for clinical training be subordinated to the agency's need to

generate revenue nor will it substitute for the delivery of services by the staff. The externs' service delivery activities are predominantly learning-oriented because they involve opportunities for clinical exposure, experiential learning, discussion and application of clinical intervention, and supervision.

The Psychology Setting

There are over 45 doctoral-level clinical psychologists at the JBVAMC, as well as administrative support personnel. Several of the psychology supervisors have faculty appointments in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine or at Northwestern University's medical school, and an increasing number of psychologists have obtained or are pursuing board certification.

The Jesse Brown VAMC is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse work force and appreciates the benefits of having trainees and staff that represent a wide array of diverse groups across a variety of domains. We value the unique contributions offered by individuals with diverse cultural and personal characteristics and experiences, and understand that these differences improve the climate of the workplace, contribute to more meaningful conversations, and increase the quality of training and the services provided to Veterans.

As a Psychology Service, we are aware that we operate in a system and culture that was not built for a number of minority statuses. We are committed to a process of becoming more aware of the ways in which we may actively facilitate the continuance of policies and processes that oppress minority groups and the individuals who belong to them. We are seeking candidates who are actively engaged in anti-racist work as well as other efforts to shift systemic inequalities for oppressed groups, as we seek to further our collective efforts towards inclusion and equality for all people - veterans and staff included. This is daily, effortful, and uncompromising work, and we are committed to it. We strongly encourage individuals with minoritized identities to apply.

Training Program Overview

Externs are provided various training options; however, despite the fact that externs are interviewed and typically offered externships through a particular track under the assumption that they will be rotating through that track, **no rotations can be absolutely promised to an extern.** Each rotation is supervised by a psychology staff member; in the event that staffing changes occur, the program commits to ensuring that the extern will continue to meet the training expectations outlined in the applicable training agreement, although JBVAMC's program reserves the right to change the rotational assignments to reflect where we are most able to provide the highest quality training experience to the extern.

Structure

Externship tracks typically involve either 1) two six-month rotations (approximately July–December and January–June) or 2) one year-long rotation (approximately July–June). Externs must be willing to dedicate approximately 20 hours per week to their involvement in the psychology externship program. Of the 20 hours, a minimum of 1 hour of supervision, along with 1 hour of mandatory extern didactic seminar participation (currently scheduled on Fridays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.) is expected, although the exact amount of supervision is frequently increased to meet the needs of the extern and the expectations of the extern's academic program.

Most rotations involve a combination of individual psychotherapy, group therapy, and assessment, and they frequently involve interdisciplinary team consultation. Some opportunity for psychological assessment may also be available, pending extern interest, clinical rotation, and supervisory availability, but we do not currently offer any diagnostic or assessment-only tracks. All rotations principally occur at the main Chicago facility, and pending the clinical setting and patient needs, there may be opportunities to provide services via synchronous video or phone. Currently, there is no stipend or other financial support associated with our externship positions.

The Seminar Series

Externs attend a one-hour mandatory weekly seminar, currently held virtually on Friday afternoon from 1:30-2:30pm (time/day is subject to change). Topics are chosen for their clinical and professional development relevance, focusing strongly on evidence-based treatment approaches and interventions, professional development, diversity, equity, and inclusion topics, and case conceptualization. There will be ample time allotted to address questions and resources for externs applying to internship during this training year.

Supervision and Evaluation

The majority of supervision provided at the JBVAMC is individual supervision. Each trainee is assigned supervisors for each rotation. Hours of formal one-to-one supervision usually range from 1–2 per week. The supervisors are the psychologists who work in those program areas. The externs may evaluate their supervisors and present these evaluations in written form. Also, the supervisors provide externs an assessment of their current state of professional development in a written evaluation. Scheduled evaluations occur at the end of each major rotation. The trainees' academic directors of training are provided with written progress summaries, upon request, at the completion of each rotation and throughout the training year as needed.

The training staff are aware that local academic programs maintain individual standards for their students' externship programs. The JBVAMC externship program does its best to meet these standards and to accommodate reasonable requests for the purpose of meeting academic programs' local policies (e.g., by using specific evaluations of student progress, as well as at times other than those described above, by providing audiotapes of

students' sessions with patients, by agreeing to certain conditions of documentation). Please understand that the JBVAMC ultimately must adhere to VA regulations and relevant statutes in the training of its externs; thus, please provide expectations of participation as early as possible so that these can be reviewed in advance. Designated officials at the academic programs' institutions of higher education are also required to sign an affiliation agreement with the JBVAMC before their students can begin participating in our externship program.

Track Options

**Denotes a track that is open only to advanced standing doctoral students or students who have previous diagnostic assessment and psychotherapy experience (e.g., second year doctoral student with a terminal master's degree in counseling or a related field)*

Addictions: This track may include work focused in the Addictions Treatment Program or the Drug Dependence Treatment Center at the main hospital in Chicago. The optimal candidate will have (a) a background in addictions in clinical experience/coursework or, in its absence, a strong motivation to learn about addictions; (b) a background in dual diagnosis and relevant Evidence Based Practices (e.g., Motivation Enhancement, CBT) in clinical experience/coursework or, in its absence, a strong motivation to learn these areas; and (c) a strong clinical foundation, both academically and in patient work, in diagnostic interviewing, individual therapy and group therapy. Opportunities may include psychological testing as well as intermediate and advanced psychotherapy. Advanced practicum students may be given preferential consideration.

***Day Hospital Program:** This year-long track is in an intensive outpatient partial hospitalization program. It is an advanced psychotherapy training rotation, with opportunities centered on time-limited therapy and the acute management of crises or transitions, though still with considerable psychoeducation regarding more chronic conditions. The client population is diverse in every way, and typically includes many young warzone veterans. As a member of an authentically interdisciplinary team, the extern typically serves as the primary therapist and case manager for two patients at a time, with the option to obtain supervised training in Prolonged Exposure or Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD as well as other evidence-based approaches to therapy. The extern co-leads between 7-8 therapy groups each week, including one of the three intensive therapy groups that meets three times weekly. Externs participate in milieu therapy and case discussions/presentations. A prospective extern for this rotation should have prior individual psychotherapy experience, can commit to a morning-heavy schedule, and is motivated to explore a range of approaches to the therapeutic process, including management of high-risk clinical situations and psychosocial stressors in the "real world."

Health Psychology: This track offers both broad and in-depth experiences in health psychology, typically across three different rotations with three different supervisors. Likely rotations include Pain Management, Weight Management, and Health Promotion Disease Prevention. For several years, JBVAMC and Northwestern University also have jointly hosted a Health Psychology Seminar, and Jesse Brown health psychology externs have been able to co-facilitate and attend the seminar, with topics including Reproductive Medicine, Sleep Medicine, and Organ Transplants, among others. The ideal candidate will have a strong interest in health psychology, and the externship has historically placed trainees in a competitive position for an internship in health psychology.

***Inpatient Psychology:** This track offers a breadth of treatment experiences (e.g., individual and group psychotherapy) along with some diagnostic assessment experiences (e.g., objective personality assessment, symptom validity testing) in an inpatient psychiatric setting. Externs work closely with the supervisor in a locked unit to provide services for Veterans who experience a variety of acute psychiatric and medical conditions, including mood disorders, psychotic spectrum disorders, and substance use disorders. The division of time spent on these activities will vary among externs based on training needs and interests; for example, some externs will seek training and experience with implementing evidenced-based psychotherapy in group formats (e.g., Social Skills Training, Illness Management and Recovery, Wellness Recovery Action Plan), whereas others will be interested in implementing evidenced-based interventions for veterans with psychotic symptoms (e.g., CBT-psychosis). Special emphasis will be focused on the assessment and treatment of veterans who pose a high risk for self- or other-directed harm. In addition, externs will have an opportunity to provide staff trainings and consult with interdisciplinary team members with a focus on the Recovery Model, a framework that emphasizes a person's healing by instilling hope, respecting preferences, and identifying strengths. The ideal extern has prior individual psychotherapy experience and is an advanced standing student who is motivated to work in a fast-paced, self-directed environment.

Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI): The PCMHI track allows trainees to gain valuable experience in behavioral health service delivery in the fast-paced primary care setting working alongside a variety of different disciplines such as physicians, nurses, dietitians, and pharmacists. The central focus of this rotation is to obtain valuable experience as a functioning member of an interdisciplinary PCMHI team, including 4 psychologists, 3 social workers, a psychiatrist, nurse care manager, and a psych tech. The extern is an integral part of the team and works closely with staff psychologists to provide a wide range of services. The extern will provide curbside consultation and collaborate with primary care providers to provide same-day mental health and behavioral health services for Veterans. The goal of this rotation is to establish skills in brief assessment (under 30 minutes), deliver targeted, brief psychological interventions, and focus recommendations based on nature of functional impairment. Treatment is brief in nature (4-6 sessions) and focused on evidence-based interventions including brief CBT, motivational interviewing, problem solving therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I),

mindfulness-based stress reduction, and a variety of other brief treatments with an emphasis on measurement-based care. The extern will develop strong skills in time management and concise note writing in this fast-paced environment. The extern will see a wide range of presenting problems, including mild-moderate anxiety and depression, mild alcohol and substance use, insomnia, relationship issues, grief, and many other concerns. The extern will also receive training in behavioral medicine interventions that target co-morbid physical and psychological disorders and address varying clinical presentations, including weight concerns, diabetes, sleep apnea, tobacco use, medication non-adherence, and other health conditions that interfere with Veteran's quality of life. Additionally, the extern may have the opportunity to co-facilitate several PCMHI groups, including Relaxation and Stress Less (REST), Healthy Sleep Habits, Healthy Aging, Anger Management, Race Based Stress and Resiliency, and Healthy Living/Lifestyle. Opportunities for PCMHI National Competency Certification may be available depending on availability of regional program.

***Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** The PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) is a specialty outpatient treatment program that provides evidence-based assessment and therapy to Veterans of all eras who have experienced a variety of military or non-military related traumatic events, including combat, sexual assault, accidents, and more. The population served by the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center's PCT has complex needs that often include daily stressors in addition to PTSD. Comorbidity is common, and substance use, mood, anxiety, and other disorders are often diagnosed in addition to PTSD. Rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness are high among the client population. This track focuses on the assessment of current posttraumatic stress and providing individual evidence-based trauma-focused psychotherapy. A strong candidate would have: (a) experience in general assessment and individual psychotherapy; and (b) interest and motivation to learn about posttraumatic stress. Training opportunities will include assessment of posttraumatic stress, developing a strong foundation in individual evidence-based trauma-focused psychotherapy, and consultation with medical professionals of different disciplines (e.g. psychology, psychiatry, social work, nursing). Externs may also have the opportunity to co-facilitate group therapy, depending on their schedule and group offerings during the training year.

***Post 9/11 Military2VA (M2VA) Psychology Program:** This one-year track is also a part of PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) services with specialty training in the unique needs of transitioning service members and Post 9/11 era veterans. Veterans with history of deployment in the Global War on Terror face significant and ongoing challenges with high prevalence of adverse psychological, physical, spiritual, and family impacts. Experiences may include co-facilitating at least two groups (namely, mind-body interventions and a process/psychoeducational group), conducting thorough PTSD evaluations, and carrying 10-12 individual patients at any given time. Additional experiences outside of PCT may include participating in conjoint couples counseling and learning brief psychotherapy interventions (i.e., six sessions or less). This track also addresses the importance of case formulation including how to match

treatment interventions to Veteran needs, values, and aspirations to promote improved adjustment and well-being. The optimal candidate will be self-motivated, will be open to clinical orientations beyond CBT, and will have strong writing skills.

***Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) Program:** The PRRC is a recovery-oriented, intensive outpatient skills building program that caters to adult Veterans who have been diagnosed with Serious Mental Illness (e.g., Schizophrenia, Major Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and experience significant functional impairment. The PRRC population is diverse in race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and cognitive/physical functioning. Programming is curriculum-based and specifically designed to teach the requisite skills that are necessary for defining and realizing Veterans' self-chosen roles and goals in all domains of health and life. Students applying for this specialized training experience should express a specific interest in psychiatric rehabilitation and recovery-oriented therapeutic care. The PRRC is staffed by one psychologist, one nurse, one peer support specialist, two social workers, and one recreation therapist. Specifically, the extern will have the opportunity to receive supervision and training in evidence-based psychotherapies (group and individual) for Veterans presenting with symptoms associated with depression (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy), serious mental illness (Social Skills Training, Illness Management and Recovery), Borderline Personality Disorder (Dialectical Behavior Therapy), and motivation/behavioral health concerns (Problem Solving Training, Motivational Interviewing, Behavioral Activation and Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Insomnia). Moreover, the extern will have the opportunity to implement interventions from Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Psychosis and Skills Training in Affect and Interpersonal Regulation. Because a majority of Veterans who present for mental health treatment experience suicidality, the extern will have the extensive opportunities to develop their suicide assessment skills by completing suicide assessment measures (e.g., Columbia- Suicide Severity Rating Scale and the VA Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation) and personalized safety plans. This track is for Advanced Practicum students only.

***Telehealth Hub:** This track is a fully virtual externship with the VISN 12 Clinical Resource Hub (CRH). The CRH is a telehealth team that serves veterans throughout the Midwest. The goal of the CRH is to provide services to veterans in underserved areas. The vision of CRH is to optimize health care delivery for veterans through efficient use of resources and innovative technologies to meet their healthcare needs. This rotation would allow externs to familiarize themselves with VHA telehealth technology and learn about clinical and ethical issues unique to providing care through telehealth. The team provides clinical services to veterans with a range of presenting problems, including depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders, anger, substance abuse, insomnia, chronic pain, and interpersonal concerns. Externs on this rotation would carry a small caseload of individual psychotherapy cases. The following evidence-based psychotherapies may be offered: CBT/ACT/IPT for Depression, CBT for Insomnia, CBT/ACT for Chronic Pain, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Prolonged

Exposure Therapy, and Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation. Additional training opportunities may include couples therapy, biopsychosocial assessment, or developing a telehealth group. Given the range of presenting problems treated in this clinic, the training experiences can be tailored to the extern's interests.

Training Year Dates

Anticipated Start Date:	Wednesday, July 5, 2023
Anticipated End Date:	Friday, June 21, 2024
Holidays:	All federal holidays are scheduled days off. An additional day after the Thanksgiving holiday and several days around Christmas Day and New Year's Day are typically given as scheduled days off and announced at the beginning of the training year.
Leave:	A limited number of hours of leave are provided to be used throughout the year, shared between personal and sick time. Externs applying for internship are granted extra leave hours for the purpose of attending interviews.
Schedules:	Specific schedules are determined prior to the beginning of each rotation with the applicable supervisors.

Required Minimum Criteria Used to Screen Applicants

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adheres to all Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies. As a Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Health Professions Trainee (HPT), you will receive a Federal appointment, and the following requirements will apply prior to that appointment:

- 1. U.S. Citizenship.** HPTs who receive a direct stipend (pay) must be U.S. citizens. Trainees who are not VA paid (e.g., Psychology Externs) who are not U.S. citizens may be appointed and must provide current immigrant, non-immigrant or exchange visitor documents.
- 2. U.S. Social Security Number.** All VA appointees must have a U.S. social security number (SSN) prior to beginning the pre-employment, on-boarding process at the VA.
- 3. Selective Service Registration.** Male applicants born after 12/31/1959 must have registered for the Selective Service by age 26 to be eligible for U.S. government employment, including selection as a paid or WOC VA trainee. For additional information about the Selective Service System, and to register or to check your registration status visit <https://www.sss.gov/>. Anyone who was required to register but did not register before the age of 26 will need to apply for a Status Information Letter (SIL) and request a waiver. Waivers are rare and requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the VA Office of Human Resources Management. This process can take up to six months for a verdict.
- 4. Fingerprint Screening and Background Investigation.** All HPTs will be fingerprinted and undergo screenings and background investigations. Additional details about the required

background checks can be found at the following website: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/10450.html>.

5. Drug Testing. Per Executive Order 12564, the VA strives to be a Drug-Free Workplace. HPTs are not drug-tested prior to appointment, however are subject to random drug testing throughout the entire VA appointment period. You will be asked to sign an acknowledgement form stating you are aware of this practice. See item 8 below.

6. Affiliation Agreement. To ensure shared responsibility between an academic program and the VA there must be a current and fully executed Academic Affiliation Agreement on file with the VHA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA). The affiliation agreement delineates the duties of VA and the affiliated institution. Most APA-accredited doctoral programs have an agreement on file. More information about this document can be found at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/agreements.asp> (see section on psychology internships). Post-degree programs typically will not have an affiliation agreement, as the HPT is no longer enrolled in an academic program and the program is VA sponsored.

7. TQCVL. To streamline on-boarding of HPTs, VHA Office of Academic Affiliations requires completion of a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL). An Educational Official at the Affiliate must complete and sign this letter. For post-graduate programs where an affiliate is not the program sponsor, this process must be completed by the VA Training Director. Your VA appointment cannot happen until the TQCVL is submitted and signed by senior leadership from the VA facility. For more information about this document, please visit <https://www.va.gov/OAA/TQCVL.asp>

- a. **Health Requirements.** Among other things, the TQCVL confirms that you, the trainee, are fit to perform the essential functions (physical and mental) of the training program and immunized following current Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and VHA policy. This protects you, other employees and patients while working in a healthcare facility. Required are annual tuberculosis screening, Hepatitis B vaccine, COVID-19 vaccine, as well as annual influenza vaccine. *Declinations are EXTREMELY rare.* If you decline the annual influenza vaccine, you will need to provide written justification for medical or religious reasons.
- b. **Primary source verification of all prior education and training** is certified via the TQCVL. Training and Program Directors will be contacting the appropriate institutions to ensure you have the appropriate qualifications and credentials as required by the admission criteria of the training program in which you are enrolled.

8. Additional On-boarding Forms. Additional pre-employment forms include the Application for Health Professions Trainees (VA 10-2850D) and the Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306). These documents and others are available online for review at <https://www.va.gov/oaa/app-forms.asp>. Falsifying any answer on these required Federal documents will result in the inability to appoint or immediate dismissal from the training program.

9. Proof of Identity per VA. VA on-boarding requires presentation of two source documents (IDs). Documents must be unexpired and names on both documents must match. For more information visit: https://www.oit.va.gov/programs/piv/_media/docs/IDMatrix.pdf

Additional information regarding eligibility requirements for appointment as a psychology HPT can be found here: [Am I Eligible? Checklist for VA HPTs](#)

Application Procedures

Materials

- A current letter of interest, naming the desired rotation track(s), and tailored to the rotation(s) of interest. Please do not apply to more than 3 tracks.
- A current curriculum vitae
- Graduate transcripts from the most recently completed academic period
- A letter of readiness for an advanced-standing externship from the applicant's academic director of training
- Two letters of recommendation

Specific Procedures

- Applicants are asked to submit all of their materials* to the Director of Training in a single email using the subject title "Externship Application for [Candidate's First and Last Name]." to vhachspychologytraining@va.gov
- *If a letter writer prefers to send their letter of recommendation directly to the Director of Training, please have the letter writer email to the same address using the subject title "Externship Letter for [Candidate's First and Last Name]."

We will begin accepting applications on January 16, 2023. **The final deadline for submitting applications is on January 20, 2023 at 5pm Central Standard Time.**
Applications not submitted by that deadline will not be considered.

No interview offers will be made until after the application deadline of January 20, 2023.

We plan to complete virtual interviews beginning as early as January 30, 2023 and throughout the first few weeks of February. If you are being considered for more than one rotation, you may be asked to interview separately for each rotation.

Offers will be made after interviews have been completed (exact dates TBD)

We request that applicants notify us immediately if they wish to withdraw from consideration at our site.

Contact for Submissions/Application Inquiries:

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Email: vhachspychologytraining@va.gov

Last Updated: September 2022

